



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Health

**Guidelines
for
Businesses/Facilities/Institutions
Reopening after lifting of Restrictions
Post COVID-19**



Version 2
May 15, 2020

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Repealing Clause

The Guidelines is for Businesses/Facilities/Institutions Reopening after lifting of Restrictions Post COVID-19.

Effectivity Clause

This Guideline becomes effective when approved and signed by the duly appointed officer(s) and is to be reviewed every ten (10) years or as needed.

Signatories



Chief Medical Officer

15th May, 2020
Date


Permanent Secretary

15/5/2020
Date


Minister of Health

15/5/2020
Date

1. Background

Pandemic outbreaks such as COVID-19 have the potential to destabilize and disrupt health systems and may have a profound effect on all aspects of a country's economy and the mental and physical health of the population.

As a result, a recovery plan with a phased ease of restrictions utilising appropriate guidelines for the reopening of businesses, institutions and facilities is a tool utilised for mitigating the risk of the transmission of COVID-19.

2. International Context

On March 11th, 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the 2019-nCoV to be a pandemic and as of May 14th, 2020, there were 4,248,389 confirmed cases with 292,046 deaths across 213 countries (WHO Situational Report No. 115).

The WHO has developed strategic advice for countries considering lifting restrictions noting that this is not the end of the pandemic but just the beginning of the recovery phase. Notably, these guidelines were developed using WHO/CDC interim guidance for businesses and employers responding to COVID-19.

The key objectives of this phase is to educate, engage and empower people to change their behaviour in such a way based on public health guidelines. In this instance the following criteria for lifting the restrictions are as follows:

- The transmission is adequately controlled;
- Health system capacities are in place to detect, test, isolate and treat every COVID-19 case and trace every contact;
- Outbreak risks are minimized in special settings like health facilities and nursing homes;
- Preventive measures are in place in workplaces, schools and other public places;
- Importation risks can be managed; and

- Communities are educated, engaged and empowered to adjust to the “new normal” with the following protocols:
 - Wear masks when you go out in public;
 - Keep your distance from others (6ft);
 - Stay home if you are ill;
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol based sanitizer;
 - Cough into a tissue or into the crook of your elbow;
 - Avoid touching your face; and
 - Clean then sanitize surfaces (e.g. table tops, door knobs and cell phones).

The guidelines were sourced from WHO and CDC interventions for COVID-19 and the key source documents were derived from the following links:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>;
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>; and
- <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf>

3. Local Context

On January 31st, 2020, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT) proclaimed COVID-19 as a dangerous infectious disease under the the Public Health Ordinance, Chap. 12 No. 4. This intervention was necessary in order to trigger the special provisions under the Ordinance that are pertinent to the curtailment and management of infectious diseases such as notification, special inspections and offences.

Trinidad and Tobago's main goal is to control the disease progression by slowing down transmission and reducing mortality associated with Covid-19 with the ultimate aim of reaching a state of low level or no transmission.

In light of the above, during the period February to May 2020, Trinidad and Tobago, similar to other countries, instituted several containment measures against COVID-19, which included the initial travel bans to China, Italy, Iran, Spain, Germany, Singapore and South Korea and ultimately closing its borders on March 22nd, 2020.

Other significant measures included the issuance of stay at home orders for workers in non-essential services including mass gatherings in public spaces; with the sequential closure of schools; gatherings at houses of worship; closure of bars, cinemas; and the subsequent cessation of operation of all services at restaurants and fast-food outlets and limitation of operating hours for commercial retail and wholesale outlets, on April 6th, 2020.

As at May 14th, 2020, there were 116 positive cases and eight (8) deaths with over 2,500 testing being conducted since the inception of the virus. As the country moves into another phase of combating this pandemic, it is important that there is scaled up and reinforcement of critical public health and social precautionary measures such as wearing mask in all public spaces; social distancing and personal protective measures (hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette). Further, reinforcement of public health and social measures that were implemented included movement restrictions, closure of schools and businesses and boarder control measures.

Ideally, there should be a balance with the level of restrictions and the economic costs of these measures to balance the benefits and potential harms of adjusting these measures so as to not generate a reappearance of Covid-19 cases locally. In this regard, the Ministry of Health has taken the approach to institute these guidelines based on scientific evidence, lessons from other countries, economic factors, security-related factors, human rights, food security and public feeling and adherence to measures. As such, these guidelines are aimed at adjusting public health and social measures while managing the risk of resurgence of cases in businesses/facilities/institutions in reopening after the lifting of restrictions implemented in Trinidad and Tobago.

4. Objectives of the Guidelines

To provide businesses/facilities/institutions, (private and non-private sectors), in Trinidad and Tobago that are frequently accessed by the public with a suite of core, and selected sector-specific, guidelines with complementary/supplementary measures aimed at preventing and controlling COVID-19.

5. Key Stakeholders and Users of the Guidelines

These guidelines directly apply, in its first iteration, all businesses/facilities/institutions, (private and non-private sectors), across Trinidad and Tobago including but not limited to groceries and supermarkets; stores, churches, banks, homes for the aged, offices, schools, public and state sector agencies.

6. Key pre-requisites and assumptions for the implementation of the Guidelines

- i. Recognition that the guidelines cited below are generalised, setting out basic parameters to be considered for conduct of business;
- ii. The basic measures of social distancing, hand washing, wearing face masks, and staying at home if one has symptoms of acute respiratory infections, and the inherent individual responsibilities, remain the cornerstone of any measures targeting businesses/facilities/institutions;
- iii. The variety with which businesses/facilities/institutions present themselves makes it impossible to specify guidelines a priority. Within this context, these businesses/facilities/institutions would need to develop contextualised plans, informed by these guidelines, and submit same for review and approval prior to conduct of business;
- iv. Given the above, and with recognition of the fundamental role of individual responsibility, regardless of whether being a customer, owner, proprietor, government agency, or any other category of stakeholder, the success of these guidelines is dependent on a robust communication strategy; and

- v. A MOH-supported repository of protocols submitted by individual establishments, and approved by the MOH, for access of the wider public to inform their planning for reopening business.

7. Implementation of the Guidelines

Given the existing network of CMOHs, and the Public Health Inspectorate across Trinidad and Tobago, individual establishments are advised to submit tailored plans, inclusive of protocols for re-opening, to the offices of the CMOHs for review and approval, under the cover of the Office of the CMO. Following this review and communication of approval, the Public Health Inspectorate shall support the translation of said plans into action within the establishments, and under the terms of the existing legal frameworks with continuous assessment and reporting on the adherence of these guidelines.

7.1 Core recommendations aimed at preventing and controlling COVID-19

Employers must promote social distancing practices for employees and control customer flow; frequent and adequate employee handwashing, facilities and surface sanitation; and ensure sick employees stay home or go home if they feel ill. Employers must also provide basic workplace hazard education about coronavirus and how to prevent transmission in the language best understood by the employee. The following are the guidelines for specific areas:

7.1.1 Physical / Social Distancing

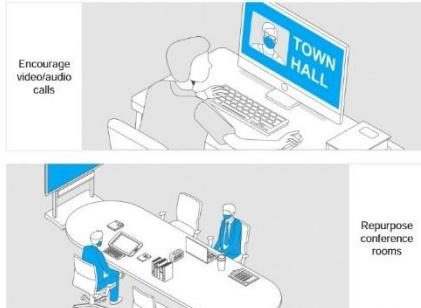
- All persons must keep at least six feet away from each other (co-worker and member of the public). This should include:-
 - Setting work stations further apart or reducing the number of work stations in use at a given time;

Ensure physical separation within the office space

Separate seating arrangements



**Limit larger gatherings/
meetings of employees**



- Moving certain tasks or meeting to times or locations with fewer people present;

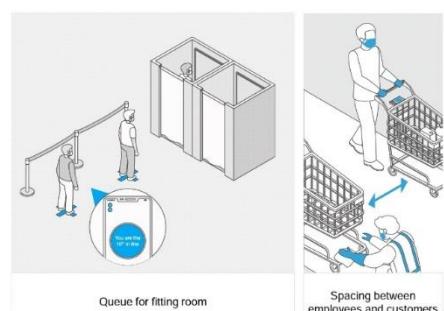
**Install plexiglass barriers between
employees and customers**



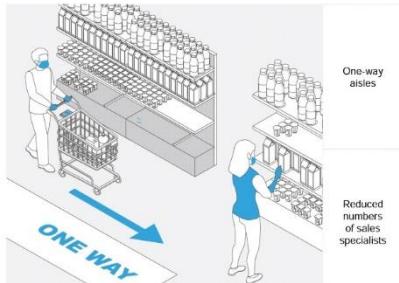
- Make provisions to prevent close contact between workers and others (e.g., co-workers and the public) when transferring items, tools, or materials. For example, require one at-a-time access at designated drop-off/pick-up points;

- Ensure physical separation between customers by using dividers / barriers or floors markings to distinguish appropriate spacing for people waiting in lines or in front of service counters

**Ensure physical separation
between customers**

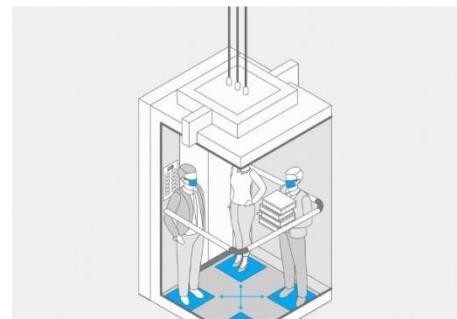


Implement one-way store aisles with fewer sales specialists



- Establishments with lanes and aisles should implement a one way system with fewer sale specialists

Limit capacity in elevators

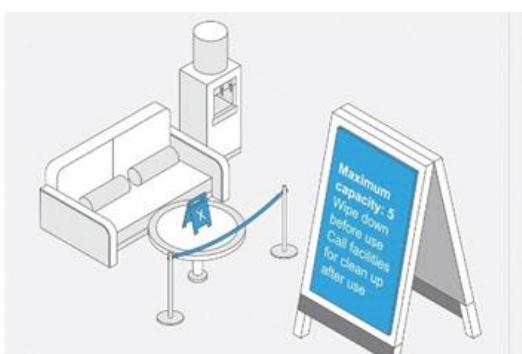


- Limit capacity in elevators to accommodate social distancing depending on the size of the elevator car.

- Implement curb-side pickup, delivery or use of mail services where appropriate
- Use one or more employee(s) as a “physical distance monitor” similar to a safety monitor to ensure social distancing practices are consistently followed.

• Break Areas and Meeting Rooms

Close common areas and provide strict protocols for when they reopen



- Stagger break and lunch schedules to minimize occupancy; or limit and monitor occupancy based on the size and layout of the room;
- Hold gatherings in larger spaces or outdoors where workers can readily spread out;

- Set up rooms to facilitate appropriate distancing; for example, provide a limited number of chairs at appropriate distance apart;
- Utilize virtual meetings and other communication methods instead of in-person meetings where feasible.

7.1.2 Sanitation

Frequent cleanings throughout the day, and not just at the end of the day should be done.

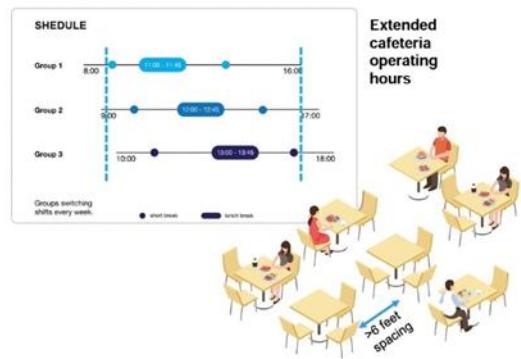
Emphasize high-frequency, high-visibility cleaning (2/2)



- Establish a housekeeping schedule to incorporate routine cleaning with regular, frequent, and periodic cleaning during the day / night¹;
- Provide appropriate and adequate cleaning supplies for scheduled and, when necessary, spot cleaning and cleaning after a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case;
- Ensure floors, counters, and other surfaces are regularly cleaned with water and soap, or other cleaning liquids to prevent build-up of dirt and residues that can harbor contamination;

Stagger lunch hours and time spent in common areas

Staggered lunch schedule



¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cleaning-disinfection.html>

- Ensure high-touch surfaces (door knobs, elevator buttons, handles, rails, telephone, desks, countertops) and shared spaces (lunch rooms, washrooms, change rooms, locker rooms) are properly disinfected on a frequent or periodic basis using a bleach solution using 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) per gallon of water or 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water² or 70% alcohol solutions or other EPA-approved disinfectant³;
- Ensure shared work vehicles are regularly cleaned and disinfected.
- Ensure that contracted service providers are competent to clean and that they have arrangements in place regarding their workers' health status;
- Ensure employees follow effective cleaning procedures and use protective gloves and eye/face protection (e.g. face shields and/or goggles) when mixing, spraying, and wiping with liquid cleaning products, like diluted bleach

Emphasize high-frequency, high-visibility cleaning (1/2)



7.13 Personnel Hygiene

- Provide adequate fixed or portable hand washing facilities or stations at workplaces and jobsites so employees and the general public / visitors / customers can wash their hands frequently with soap and hot and cold (or tepid) running water. Ideal to have easy open-close taps or pedal actuated or hands free taps;
- Endorse and encourage proper mask etiquette within the establishment. Refer to point v below for further details;

Encourage frequent and staggered sanitization breaks for all employees



² <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html>

³ <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

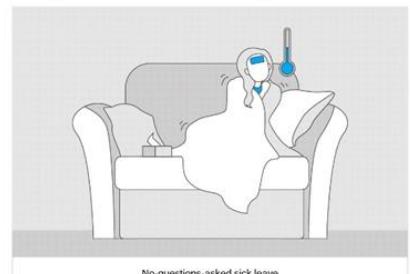
- Ensure an adequate supply of soap, water, and disposable towels; set up a schedule for frequent restocking of supplies and emptying of trash;
- Require workers to wash hands frequently and effectively when they arrive at work, leave their workstations for breaks, use the bathroom; before and after they eat or drink or use tobacco products; and after touching any surfaces suspected of being contaminated.
- Provide supplemental hand sanitizer (minimum content of 60% alcohol) stations, wipes or towelettes, or clean water and soap in portable containers to facilitate more frequent handwashing after handling objects touched by others;
<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-hand-sanitizer.html>
- PPE may be provided but also must be washed regularly to prevent the spread of the virus.

7.1.4 Procedures to Address Sick Persons

Employers must establish procedures to:

- Facilitate ill workers to stay home and seek medical attention if required;
- After the ill person has vacated the establishment, ensure immediate and proper cleaning and sanitisation of the area;
- Conduct daily COVID-19 symptoms checks of employees, contractors, suppliers, customers and visitors entering the worksite; for example, use a brief questionnaire or thermal scanning; and
- Encourage workers to report concerns and use paid sick leave, using the guidance of the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development.

Issue clear guidance on sick leave, compensation and related policies



No-questions-asked sick leave

7.15.5 The use of Masks and PPE

WHO has issued specific guidelines advising on the proper use of masks and other PPE, which include but not limited to the following:

- Before putting on a mask, clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water;
- Cover mouth and nose with mask and make sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask;
- Avoid touching the mask while using it; if you do, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water;
- Replace the mask with a new one as soon as it is damp and do not re-use single-use masks; and
- To remove the mask: remove it from behind (do not touch the front of mask); discard immediately in a closed bin; clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.

These guidelines can be accessed by using the web link below:-

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>

7.1.6 Information and Health Education

Employee education, as well as education of the other persons utilising the establishment, is important, and must be provided by employees in a manner in which they will understand. The risk must be communicated to them, and they must know the risk, signs and prevention of Covid-19. The information must be communicated through readable signs and messages. Employees should also be able to provide feedback to help improve safety at the establishment.

Highlight new workplace safety processes and policies through prominent displays

Informational materials in displays and advertising



- Promote healthy personal habits with high visibility signage and media campaigns.

- Display posters promoting hand-washing, proper uses of mask and gloves –ask your local public health authority for these or look on www.WHO.int.
- Implement communication measures such as offering guidance from occupational health and safety

officers, briefings at meetings

Promote healthy personal habits with high-visibility signage and media campaigns

- Circulate information on the intranet to promote hand-washing and good hygiene measures such proper cough and sneezes etiquette.



Clearly denote expected practices

8. Guidelines for Specialised Establishments

i. WHO Operational Considerations for COVID-19 Management in the Accommodation Sector (Hotel and Tourism)

This document details information in the following areas for the accommodation / tourism sector:-

- a. Guidelines for the Management Team;
- b. Reception & Concierge;
- c. Technical & Maintenance Services;
- d. Restaurants, Breakfast and Dining Rooms and Bars⁴;
- e. Recreational Areas for Children;
- f. Cleaning & Housekeeping; and
- g. Handling COVID-19 cases in hotels and tourism accommodation establishments

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/restaurants-and-bars-decision-tree.pdf>

These guidelines can be accessed by using the web link below:-

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331937/WHO-2019-nCoV-Hotels-2020.2-eng.pdf>

ii. CDC guidelines on Manufacturing Workers and Employers

As of May 14th 2020, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued Interim Guidance for manufacturing workers and employers. The manufacturing work environment entails the production of items through assembly lines and other areas, where workers have close contact with co-workers and supervisors and this may contribute substantially to workers' potential exposures. The risk of occupational transmission of COVID-19 on several factors include; distance between workers, duration of contact, type of contact and the ergonomics within the workplace. Therefore, recommendations for controls should be instituted for engineering, facilities and administration within the working environment. The details of these guidelines can be accessed through the following link:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-manufacturing-workers-employers.html>

iii. WHO Getting the Workplace Ready for COVID-19

This document gives advice on:

- Simple ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your workplace;
- How to manage COVID-19 risks when organizing meetings and events;
- Things to consider when you and your employees travel; and
- Getting your workplace ready in case COVID-19 arrives in your community.

These guidelines can be accessed by using the web links below:-

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/advice-for-workplace-clean-19-03-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=bd671114_6&download=true

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-manufacturing-workers-employers.html>

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

The CMOHs and the Public Health Inspectorate will provide continuous assessment and reporting to the Chief Medical officer on the implementation of these guidelines through continuous site visits and inspection of premises to ensure strict adherence to the guidelines for the reopening of businesses, institutions and facilities as it is a critical intervention in the mitigating the risk of the transmission of COVID-19.

10. References

- i. World Health Organisation, March 3rd, 2020, *Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19*.
<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf>
- ii. Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, May 14th, 2020, Businesses and Workplaces-Plan, Prepare and Respond.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>
- iii. World Health Organisation, April 7th, 2020, COVID-19 and Food Safety: Guidance for Food Business.
https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331705/WHO-2019-nCoV-Food_Safety-2020.1-eng.pdf
- iv. IRIS Ethical Recruitment, April 7th, 2020, *COVID-19: Guidance for employers and business to enhance migrant worker protection during the current health crisis*, Version 1.0.
https://iris.iom.int/sites/default/files/IOM-COVID%2019_Employer_Guidance_V1.pdf
- v. Harry Kretchmer, April 22th, 2020, *10 Ways COVID-19 could change office design*, World Economic Forum
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/covid19-coronavirus-change-office-work-homeworking-remote-design/>